View metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
brought to you by CORE

Word and Existence in Samuel Beckett's *Trilogy*

Fumiko Takase

Preface

Pozzo : What happened exactly ?
Estragon : Exactly ! *Waiting for Godot*[1]

"Literature **is,**" Northrop Frye defines, "a specialized form of language, as language is of communication."[2] Language is, indeed, "the Flesh-Garment, the Body, of Thought,"[3] and in it literature lives, moves, and has its being. The innovations in the history of English literature — to name a few, Edmund Spenser's verse, "vncouthe and vnkiste,"[4] in *The Shepheardes Calender*, John Dryden's revolt against the metaphysical conceits and adoption of the "plain and natural, yet majestic" style,[5] Wordsworth's "selection of language really used by men,"[6] the twentieth-century veto on the decorative vocabulary, and finally James Joyce's employment of *le monologue intérieur*, evading the normal English grammatical patterns—are, after all, we may think, those for the maturity of the English language. Along with these changes, Erich Auerbach traces a growing tendency for "fragmentation of the exterior action, reflection of consciousness..., and stratification of time"[7] in his study of "the interpretation of reality through literary representation or imitation."[8] Indeed, gone is the day when a Hamlet can say that poetry holds the mirror up to nature, following the conventional Renaissance poetics through his belief that the replica of the phenomenal world can be obtained by means of words, valid for all times and places.[9]

When Wallace Stevens, in the much-quoted line (from "The Emperor of Ice-Cream"), has the "roller of big cigars" whip "In kitchen cups

concupiscent curds,"[10] one is certainly impressed with Stevens' unique process of approval of John Donne's "Death be not proud," by means of the contrast in imagery between incompetent death and luxuries of life (big cigars) and commodities (ice cream). Here the quality of the individual poet is contained within the quality of the language he uses. The style, in fact, imitates the self.[11] William Butler Yeats exclaims, "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[12] There is an inseparable and complex relationship between the language and perception of each writer. Out of the process of the withdrawal to individual consciousness there emerges the existential sense of the absurd especially in our post-war literature, where there is manifest a "cleavage between man's aspirations to unify and the insurmountable dualism of mind and nature, between man's drive toward the eternal and the finite character of his experience, between the 'concern' which constitutes his very essence and the vanity of his efforts."[13] Sartre gives us the inventory of the absurd—"Chance, death, the irreducible pluralism of life and truth, the unintelligibility of the real."[14] The contemporary writer has, on the one hand, "the amorphous, everyday flow of reality" as it is experienced through his particular kind of perception and, on the other, "the edifying reconstruction of this reality" by his own speech.[15] Fully conscious of this situation, Samuel Beckett defines art as "the apotheosis of solitude" and disparages words as the means of communication and self-expression :

> There is no communication because there are no vehicles of communication. Even on the rare occasions when word and gesture happen to be valid expressions of personality, they lose their significance on their passage through the cataract of the personality that is opposed to them. Either we speak and act for ourselves—in which case speech and action are distorted and emptied of their meaning by an intelligence that is not ours, or else we speak and act for others—in which case we speak and act a lie.[16]

In his conversation with Duthuit, Becckett, despairing of this plight, said that the artist has "nothing to express...no power to express, no desire to express, together with the obligation to express." Duthuit

naturally asked why he was obliged. Beckett could not answer.[17]

Both illogicality and asburdity of human life have already been evinced. Beckett does not seem interested to prove either one in his works as Sartre and Camus did. Instead, his writings contain a ceaseless and noisy permutation of logical questions and near definitions. The Unnamable defines the human condition: "not knowing where you came from, or where you are, or where you're going, or that it's possible to be elsewhere, to be otherwise..., the thing stays where it is.... And there is nothing for it but to wait for the end."[18] He groans at the same time:

> Ah if only this voice could stop, this meaningless voice which prevents you from being nothing, just barely prevents you from being nothing and nowhere, but just enough to keep alight this little yellow flame feebly darting from side to side, panting, as if straining to tear itself from its wick. (p. 370)

The protagonist's suffering originates not only from the uncertainty and absurdity of his situation but from "the incoercible absence of relation ... in the presence of unavailable terms,"[19] between word and meaning and, furthermore, perhaps, between word and existence.

Beckett seems, viewed from the angle of word and existence, to be presenting to the reader the problem of word crossing its proper frontier of epistemology into the domain of ontology, involving, at the same time, what T. S. Eliot called "the mind of Europe"[20] *en route*, if *epistēmē* and *ōn* be interpreted in Greek as "a placing of oneself in the position required for, hence comprehension," and "existing, being," respectively. This paper attempts to explore Beckett's idea of the relation between word and existence, focussing its study on his trilogy of *Molly*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable*.

Chapter I Introduction

> The words are everywhere, inside me, outside me..., I'm in words, made of words, others' words (p. 386).

Mimesis was, for Plato, a general term descriptive of the mental attitude of the artist.[21] Aristotle believed that "the process of imitation is natural to mankind from childhood on: man is differentiated from other animals because he is the most imitative of them, and he learns his first lessons through imitation."[22] The origin of the art of poetry lies in imitation. *Poiesis* means fabricating or producing of things in Greek.[23] Poets are those who possess this small part of *poiesis*.[24] In poetry, however, things are represented by verbal symbols, which we call words. Literature is, indeed, "a spcialized form of language, as language is of communication." This concept of *mimesis* still lives, being natural to man. Albert Camus says that "[artistic] creation is the great mime,"[25] in a slightly different context, for Ernst Robert Curtius affirms us that "to translate *poiesis* as 'creation' is to inject into the Greek view of things a foreign idea-the Hebraeo-Christian cosmogony. When we call the poet a creator, we are using a theological metaphor."[26] We see in the employment of this terminology the two patterns of *mimesis* in European literature merged: one is Greek and the other Hebraeo-Christian. Erich Auerbach was struck with wonder at such a great contrast between the two:

> On the one hand, externalized, uniformly illuminated phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, connected together without lacunae in a perpetual foreground; thought and feeling completely expressed; events taking place in leisurely fashion and with very little of suspense. On the other hand, the externalization of only so much of the phenomena as is necessary for the purpose of the narrative, all else left in obscurity; the decisive points of the narrative alone are emphasized, what lies between is nonexistent; time and place are undefined and fall for interpretation; thoughts and feeling remain unexpressed, are only suggested by the silence and the fragmentary speeches; the whole, permeated with the most

unrelieved suspense and directed toward a single goal (and to that extent far more of a unity), remains mysterious and "fraught with background."[27]

Since the phenomenal world man perceived was the shadow of the Ideal Form for the Greeks, objects external to man's mind were merely pseudo-realities, and all men aspired for the Ideal Form. Perfect correspondence between phenomenon and verbal sign at two removes from reality could never be obtained. Such a classical world perspective permits no room for creation or origninality. As a result, man learns his lessons through the imitation of the works of the past, for example, Homer, the divinely inspired pattern of the externalization of human nature, "which is still the same: / Unerring nature, still divinely bright, / One clear, unchanged, / At once the source, and end, and test of art."[28] On the other hand, in Christendom *The Gospel according to St. John* begins with "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."[29] The word started its life as a metaphor for God in the same manner as the Creator slips into and lives in the created through the concept of the Incarnation. Words were wrapt in clusters of meaning. Dante advocated the four levels of meaning in allegorical exegesis—literal, allegorical, moral and anagogical.[30] Thomas à Kempis left behind *Imitation of Christ.* In the Middle Ages of Europe the Greek imitation was given a theological dimension.

It is generally considered that our modern times tend toward the renunciation of *mimesis*[31] used in the Greek sense of the term. Since René Descartes' "Cogito, ergo sum," a tendency for subjectivity to replace tradition and the authority of the past has been increasing its vigor.[32] The individual has turned inward, finding authority for interpretation within the self. For modern men the phenomenal world is part of man's life and as such it can never be fixed into an immutable appearance, valid for all men at all times. The apprehension of reality is as varied and changing as human life. Even the self has undergone a process of fragmentation. As early as the eighteenth century, after denying the idea of self and its space-time continuum

in existence, David Hume asserted :

> I may venture to affirm... that they [selves] are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.[83]

This picture of man in diversity and fragmentation was further battered by Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God, which has left for us "a terrifying, all-embracing nothingness,"[84] because "we must reject the mythologies or religions which talk of eternity and redemption."[85] Thus, time has been reduced to instants : furthermore, through the process of fractionization of individual self time has been turned into "space or a succession or an agglomeration or a confusion of spaces."[86]

The poverty of modern man, deprived of "promised revelations" and eternity, has resulted in a reduction in scope and valuation of the meaning of language. Since the disappearance of God, the Word has been broken into words, with the blessed equilibrium between reality and its symbol having come to nothing. Now that either reality or the percipient's self can no longer be apprehended as a whole, the artist suspects that any attempt to impose words upon reality may merely constitute a superficial conceptualism without any relation to truth.

The suspicion of words as the falsifier of the true is not a modern phenomenon. Plato looked askant at writing, the fruit of *mimesis*. Save for a minor residuum, he banished poetry from his ideal philosophical state because it was pedagogically harmful.[87] At the end of *Phaedrus* Socrates rejects writing, for it offers but the semblance of wisdom to the students, not its true self.[88] This distrust of words has won the poet his "traditional reputation as a licenced liar, and [it] explains why so many words denoting literary structure, 'fable,' 'fiction,' 'myth,' and the like, have a secondary sense of untruth."[89] Even Descartes, who pursued the Truth through his rational inquiry in terms of a supervisory science, mathematics, complained against the misleading of thought by words :

> Although, without at all giving expression to what I think, I consider all this in my own mind, words yet occasionally impede my progress, and I am almost led into error by the ordinary language.[40]

These examples have presented to us ever-lasting problems of language—the impotence or tyranny of words either as the vehicle of communication and *mimesis* or as the symbolic complex of thought or the consciousness of the ego.

The Gutenberg revolution served only for confusing and widening the disparity between pseudo-reality and its symbol more than ever. There is something mechanical about all reductions of speech to an arrangement of twenty-six letters. With the development of the dictionary and the printing press the authorized vocabulary has frozen up each individual gesture of "the tongue, the voice and the breath."[41] That is, people have grown "accustomed not only to silent reading, but to reading matter that itself implies nothing but silence." The language of printed books has become, like the language of mathematics, completely dehumanized.[42] James Joyce may be called a great parodist of the printed words, exhausting his verbal resources as the artist as the "creator." In his attempt to restore oral life to its fully human plane, his language precedes the linguistic axiom asserted by Noam Chomsky that written language comes out as a result of spoken language transmitting itself into visual media.[43] In *Ulysses*, consequently, he shuts into a book the life of Dublin, chiefly its vocal life, kills it, and sets it into motion once again on a technical and comic plane, comic because it is precisely as mechanical and exhaustive as a checklist;[44] at the same time, however, "the book unmistakably aims at a symbolic synthesis of the theme 'Everyman.' All the great motifs of the cultural history of Europe are contained in it, although its point of departure is very specific individuals and a clearly established present (Dublin, June 16, 1904)."[45] Here, indeed, we have another more important "symbolic synthesis" of the two patterns of *mimesis*, Greek and Hebraeo-Christian : on the one hand, we have "externalized ... phenomena, at a definite time and in a definite place, ... in a

perpetual foreground" and, on the other, "the whole ... directed toward a single goal ... mysterious and 'fraught with background.'" His method of *le monologue intérieur* determines each character and at the same time gives to him or her symbolic meaning as part of the whole mind of Europe. His use of myth—Homer and Vico—may thus supply us with the hidden key to the door of the "epiphany." We notice that Joyce's people always journey to these revelations, and usually on foot. Samuel Beckett's first-person narrator goes on his journey on a bicycle, "a man riding a bicycle, *mens sana in corpore disposito.*"[46]

Beckett's three novels, *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, and *The Unnamable* follow a circular movement of progressive reduction, embodied in the image of "nothingness" or death, but they transfer this image to a sphere beyond personality: they aim at a drastically contracted epitome of the history of human consciousness. Molloy, incapacitated to start with, still can get about with the aid of his bicycle. His loss of the bicycle is the first stage of disintegration. Having lost the use of his legs, he can no longer drag himself about, finds himself shut up in a room, where Malone takes his place later and watches his faculties gradually deserting him. It is not long before the room shrinks into no more than a jar where a mere trunk, decaying and apparently dumb as well, approaches the final stage of its disintegration. The Cartesian parallelism of "cogito" with "sum" has been reduced to "cogito," possessed of nothing but a voice which barely prevents The Unnamable from "being nothing and nowhere" (p. 311). He is placed in a jar in front of a chop-house with its menu and a garland of many-colored lanterns attached to it as an advertizement (p. 334). The grotesque and tragic image of humanity is at once contradicted by the absurd detail of the gay lanterns and "their" cruel, indifferent yet merry attitude toward this heap of flesh. This is a world of no hope which absurdist writers have been devoted to describe.[47] As a creature of such a world The Unnamable is obsessed with a ceaseless urge for the quest for the ontological meaning of the self. It is a hopeless quest, to be sure, since he "feels nothing, knows nothing"

and thinks nothing (p. 291). He is "a wordless thing in an empty place" (p. 386).

The Unnamable, in fact, begins his book, unbelieving in his "I," unbelieving in his beginning, knowing only that the discourse must go on (p. 291). Towards the end he asks himself "whether it has not yet been our good fortune to establish with any degree of accuracy what I am, where I am, whether I am words among words, or silence in the midst of silence" (p. 388). Words are impotent as the means of the quest for identity: there is an irreducible disparity between word and reality since word has acquired its symbolical meaning through an arbitrary agreement among people imposed by habit. Especially when each individual depends upon his own manipulation of language as representative of his own consciousness, aloof from time and habit, oral life, set in print, becomes frozen and ultimately the writer becomes a liar and his quest for identity proves futile.

The futility of the ontological search for the self is juxtaposed with the impasse of writing. It is reported that Beckett confessed, after the publication of *The Unnamable*:

> In the last book, *L'Innommable*, there's complete disintegration. No "I," no "have," no "being." No nominative, no accusative, no verb. There' s no way to go on.[48]

In this book and in his statement we touch upon a disease common to many contemporary writers, which Sartre called "the obsession with silence":

> It has assumed a thousand forms, ranging from the surrealists' automatic writing to Jean-Jacques Bernard's "theatre of silence." The reason is that silence, as Heidegger says, is the authentic mode of speech.[49]

The Unnamable, however, while yearning for silence, at the same time, keeps talking, perhaps, for fear of silence. A possible solution for it is "Would it not be better if I were to keep on saying babababa, for example, while waiting to ascertain the true function of this venerable organ?" (p. 308), as is the case with Kierkegaard's: "The surest way of being mute is not to hold your tongue but to talk."[50]

Now comes back to our mind Duthuit's question why Beckett feels obliged to write in the same manner as his personae feel obliged to talk. Molloy, Moran, Malone, The Unnamable may be loaded with some answers while passing through the ordeal of disintegration.

Chapter II *Reductio ad Absurdum*

> It is then the true division begins, of twenty-two by seven for example, and the pages fill with the true ciphers at last (p. 64).

The Pythagorians were, Hugh Kenner states, horrified at their discovery of the diagonal of a square incommensurate with its side because hitherto they had been happily convinced that the system of rational numbers and the system of the visible world can be made to express one another. They were sworn never to divulge the existence of such incommensurates to outsiders, naming them *Alogon*, the unnamable.[51] Molloy, the first narrator of the trilogy, yearns to be beyond knowing anything or to get the peace of the incurious seeker of $\frac{22}{7}$ (p. 64). The notion of incommensurates has already haunted Murphy, the protagonist of Beckett's first long novel. He is freely taunted as a surd.[52] The term next appears in the following chapter of the same book, where the analogy of the "matrix of surds" is applied to the deepest zone of his mind.[53]

The "surd is derived from the Latin *surdus*, which means "deaf," but it has "the secondary meaning 'indistinct' (to hearing, also to smell, etc.); whence the English adjective 'surd,' especially, in mathematics for 'inexpressible in rational numbers,' hence as noun."[54] In Greek the "surd" becomes *alogon* or *alogos*. *Logos* originally means a speech-verbal expression (often a sentence, a saying, a phrase, rarely a word) and reason. As a result, *alogos* signifies "without speech."[55] "Deaf," "indistinct," and "without speech" are, one remembers, important attributes of the Beckettian Unnamable. Now, both in French and English "surd" corresponds to irrational and when we have its derivative, "absurd," we know it is Janus-faced, its irrationality being at once comic and terrible. In the item on the "Literature of the absurd" *The Reader's Encyclopedia* says that the tone may range from the broadly comic aspect of the absurd to the unsettling, the grotesque, or even the terrible.[56] Finally, in a circular movement starting from

the surd, we reach the unnamable or the "incommunicable" name of God through the four sacred yet awful letters in Hebrew — Y, H, W, H.[57] Thus, the surd has come to assume even the ludicra-seria air, characteristic of medieval arts and letters.[58]

It follows that it is no exaggeration, perhaps, to say that in the multiple strata of the surd image there hidden is the key to the gate of the ludicra-sacra Beckettian world, because the world is "a projection of the individual's consciousness."[59] It is, in fact, first contracted to and illustrated by Murphy's mind. It is a hollow sphere, a universe unto itself, excluding nothing it does not itself contain. There are both a physical mode and a mental mode, and the latter has three zones: the light, containing forms with parallel in the physical mode; the half light, containing forms without such parallel; and then the dark, "un flux de formes...qui devenaient et s'écroulaient dans la poussière d'un devenir nouveau." Murphy's metaphysics is, therefore, not so much idealism as solipsism. In the dark zone he is "un atome dans le noir de la liberté absolue...un point dans un bouillonnement de lignes, dans une génération et dans un effondrement, sans cesse ni condition, de lignes."[60] Whether or not attributed to such psychological terms as libido or subconsciousness, the third zone is named by Beckett "the matrix of surds."

The 1948 trilogy pursues the analysis further. The personae live in the domain of surds. Although Murphy is narrated in the traitional manner such as "He thought," or "He said," circulating around the plot, the three novels completely turn away from the light zone and free themselves at the same time from the conventional framework of time, space and plot, which technique is emphasized in the *nouveau roman*.[61] They are told in the first person singular. The protagonists' "objectivation" of their consciousness[62] is described in repetitious, circular, serial and violent motions resembling *pi*, in Hugh Kenner's terms, "the circle square — 3, 142857, 142857, 142857..... accumulating to no definite end." Here, probably, his further exposition of the domain helps clarify some of Beckett's managements of the surd.

Begin by imagining,...all the numbers there are: the domain

of the rational numbers—all the integers, all the fractions, stretching to infinity on either side of zero. On this plane move Micawber, Becky Sharp, Emma Bovary, Julien Sorel: also Pozzo and Moran.

But next imagine this domain shadowed and interpreted by the domain of the irrational numbers, infinitely numerous, each maintaining its station in the unexpected gaps between adjacent rationals. These anomalies we can more or less locate, but not exactly; the best we can do is narrow down the limlts between which they lurk... (Molloy, Moran thinks early in his quest, is somewhere "in the Molloy country," namely "that narrow region whose administrative limits he had never crossed.") Should we be able to find one, we could not, in the usual way, express it in terms of its neighbors, though without having found it we can give it a name. ("Molloy, or Mollose, was no stranger to me," recalls Moran. "Perhaps I had invented him, I mean found him ready made in my head.")[63]

Identity becomes uncertain: characters, "I," "you," "he," and "they" merge. The uncertainty of identity leads to the loss of identity. It is a scandal, as the Pythagoreans perceived, not to have identity. The Unnamable falls in a frenzy of disgust over the failure:

> to have no identity, it's a scandal, I assure you, look at this photograph, what, you see nothing, true for you, no matter, here, look at this death's head... here's the record, insults to policemen, indecent exposure, sins against holy ghost, contempt of court... deviations from reason... here's the medical report (p. 377).

The application of mathematics may be one way to approach the Unnamble but *en route* even "I" undergoes a process of algebraic fractionization—not 'I,' but innumerable 'I's,[64] and there begins "the plagiarism of oneself."[65] Malone thinks himself in terms of "nothing but a series or rather a succession of local phenomena all [his] life" (p. 234). Molloy shows his "mania for symmetry" (p. 85). Molloy spends hundreds of words on a technical account of how a man on crutches can kick another man by applying the principle of the pendulum (p. 85). Molloy thus behaves himself like a machine in the shape of a man, and a machine depends upon mathematical computa-

tion for its construction and movement. The phenomenal world is transformed into that of mechanism and its incidental methodical cruelty. However, this kind of world appears ridiculous, at the same time, for mechanism and man living in a constant flux of motion are not perfectly compatible. The comic arises from "something mechanical encrusted upon the living."[66] As the Molloy domain is to the Moran, as that of the irrational numbers is to that of the rational, so the clown's is to the ordinary man's.[67] Molloy's "mania for symmetry" makes him play the clown of incapacity. Since his mind is a darkly prehensile one, he has trouble with the transition from data to numeration. He has sixteen stones and four pockets. He spends pages on his frantic attempt to find a method whereby he can suck each one of the stones in turn, without risk, before the conclusion of the series, of sucking the same one twice. "The problem was an aesthetic problem from inception." The dream of controlling a system of calculation adequate to such a trifling question ends in frustration. He throws away all the stones except one, and he ultimately loses that one too (pp. 69-74). He fails in dealing with the frequent escapes of gas from his fundament. He exclaims, "Extraordinary how mathematics help you to know yourself" (p. 30). At another time he endeavors circular movements, but achieves perhaps "a great polygon, perfection is not of this world" (p. 90). If Sisyphus thinks each journey is the first, thinks Moran, that "would keep hope alive would it not, hellish hope. Whereas to see yourself doing the same thing endlessly over and over again fills you with satisfaction" (p. 133). These reflections only conduce the characters to withdraw more and more into the depths of the domain of irrationals.

Molloy unfolds the peace inherent in the dark zone:

> to know nothing is nothing, not to want to know anything likewise, but to be beyond knowing anything, to know you are beyond knowing anything, that is when peace enters in, to the soul of the incurious seekers. It is then the true division begins, of twenty-two by seven for example, and the pages fill with the ciphers at last (p. 64).

The "true ciphers," forming invariable patterns, move toward the secret of the circle, their sums gradually dwindle toward zero. Therein lies, perhaps, what T. S. Eliot termed "the inexpressibly terrible," the problem of which proved too much even for Shakespeare,[68] and which is, more or less, concerned with the Pythagorean pursuit of essences. On the image of the *pi* the very logic of the artist's and the philosopher's situation converges, and the art or the essence of existence, hitherto helpless, unable to come into being, comes into being as if through the epiphany. If fiction mirrors the minutiae of life, then, there stretches before every fiction-writer an infinity of possible novels : more various even, if that is possible, than life, since after a time the novels themselves begin to interbreed. "Fiction will converge if narrator M_1 and his story are inventions of narrator M_2, who in turn...."[69] The limit of this series is, probably, zero. Through the dictum of the philosophy of the *Alogos* the Beckettian personae loom up in the dim light no longer as mere clowns acting their own inability but as sage-fools in the fool comedy, the truth-tellers whose real insight was thinly disguised as a form of insanity.[70] At the same time the ludicra-seria aspect of the trilogy is called, with a nod to the Pythagorean philosophy, *The Unnamable*.

The narrator of this novel is physically reduced to "a big talking ball, talking things that do not exist, or that exist perhaps, impossible to know, beside the point" (p. 305). He is nameless, speechless, motionless, almost blind. He feels, "I like to think I occupy the center, but nothing is less certain. In a sense I would be better off at the circumference" (p. 395). His domain is "grey, dimly transparent" (p. 300), but not the dark zone, only a limbo of suffering and waiting or a sphere where *videmus nunc per speculum in aenigmate*.[71] He takes all his predecessors to task, who come and go on parade. Moreover, certain archetypes borrowed from other works are rarely forgotten for long : we continually hear of Cain, Jesus, Belacqua and Sordello. Molloy reminds us of an Odysseus who meets a Calypso named Lousse and the Cyclopean police sergeant, while Moran on his journey with his

son is an Aeneas with Ascanius. This counter-epic series, together with the other series of references and counter-references as in the book of inventory, brings the whole "mind of Europe" for inspection, contracting it to the mind of The Unnamable where he is desperately searching his own identity through his interior monologue. Epistemological and ontological questions are juxtaposed. Since the forms of language cloak the structure of the individual's world,[72] The Unnamable refuses to acknowledge that the language that he uses and intermittently understands is "theirs," having nothing to do with his own existence. He is obsessed with the idea of assigning voices to their owners, words to their sources. Wavering between the possible creator and his own creations, he denies his words and then his own self, as the circle of solipsism tightens like a noose around his neck. He presents his version of the old opposition between mind and matter, subject and object, word and reality, and macrocosm and microcosm:

> Perhaps that's what I feel, an outside and an inside and me in the middle, perhaps that's what I am, the thing that divides the world in two, on the one side the outside, on the other the inside, that can be thin as foil, I'm neither one side nor the other, I'm in the middle, I'm the partition, I've two surfaces and no thickness, perhaps that's what I feel, myself vibrating, I'm the tympanum, on the one hand the mind, on the other the world, I don't belong to either (p. 383).

By means of the monologue—chatter and ambiguity—place, time and season are broken into pieces and described at irregular intervals. The Unnamable, like his fellow creatures, rarely knows existential moments of choosing either of the two. In this world of ambivalence —"I don't belong to either"—of the self, knowledge, time, and space, the only constant is, as in the other novels and dramas, the master, who haunts the destiny of the Beckettian character. His existence is, like Godot or Youdi, never certain, because he never appears in person: he speaks to the man through such incompetent messengers as "they," Gaber or Godot's boy. The Unnamable suspects that the master may be his creator, omnipresent. Whether he is referred to

as God or *YHWH*, his empyrean is in the realm of *Alogos*. However long Gogo and Didi wait, he will never come. His presence, nevertheless, adds another dimension to the fictional world. The Unnamable seeks in vain for a voice of his own, but he realizes that he is at the mercy of a "sporting God" (p. 338) :

> What have I done to God, what have they done to God, what has God done to us, nothing, and we've done nothing to him, you can't do anything to him, he can't do anything to us, we're innocent, he's innocent, it's nobody's fault (p. 386).

"Into their unfortunate Jesus," he states, they stuck thorns, and to him there are only "the unintelligible terms of an incomprehensible damnation" (p. 308). In comparison with innocent Jesus, he believes that the punishment inflicted on him by the master is the eternal obligation to utter words, "as a punishment for having been born perhaps" (p. 310). With his conviction that there is only a hopeless, endless yet necessary dialectic between word and existence without any reprieve, The Unnamable ends his monologue with a confused, yet courageous, defiant and almost sublime declaration of "can't" and "must" and "will": "where I am, I don't know, I'll never know, in the silence you don't know, you must go on, I can't go on, I'll go on" (p. 414).

The Beckettian mathematical world is at bottom frustrating, because it cannot assimilate persons, mathematical forms being not only formal perfections as symbols but ideal non-existences. His characters, however, never cease to court their frustrations. "Nothing is," Malone insists, "more real than nothing" (p. 192). Whether they find their prototypes in the sage-fool tradition or in Chaplin, or in Punch, Pantalon, Zany, Pierrot in the heritage of the *Commedia dell' Arte*,[18] there is an eternal incongruity between mathematically constructed and manipulated mechanism and man, which lies at the heart of the absurd. The application of the surd to man is, indeed, a *reductio ad absurdum* in the literal sense of the phrase. Camus, however, says, "Men, too, secrete the inhuman. At certain moments of lucidity, the mechanical aspect of their gestures, their meaningless

pantomime makes silly everything that surrounds them."[74] The discovery of the use of the surd may have provided Beckett with some possibilities to break what Camus called "the absurd walls," inside of which every human phenomenon is subject to freeze—identity, language, aspiration for the "inexpressibly terrible." It certainly supplies Beckett, structurally, with an organizing factor for "fragmentation of the exterior action," "multiple reflection of consciousness and of multiple time strata"[75] and at the same time it succeeds in representing existence as a whole in both its ludicrous and serious aspects through symbols.

Chapter Ⅲ Man as a Machine

> I fastened my crutches to the cross-bar, one on either side, I propped the foot of my stiff leg...on the projecting front axle (p. 16).

The trilogy is, by analogy, a fiction of the "matrix of surds," the limit of which is probably zero. As a result the protagonists undergo a spiral progression of diminution. At the first stage of this diminution Molloy is separated from his bicycle, which entails the stiffening of one leg, the shortening of the other leg which had previously been stiff, the loss of the toes from one foot, staggering in circles, a crawling, a dragging of himself flat on his belly using his crutches like grapnels, brief thought of rolling. In this image of man and machine each is indispensable to the other's support. Deprived of his bicycle, he is "a mere intelligence fastened to a dying animal." Even in this state, however, Molloy is half mechanized. Periodically, as he crawls forward, he sustains the analogy by blowing his horn. "Its hoot was fainter every time." Its middle stage *Malone Dies* is dominated by the brain. No more movable, Malone uses a stick to move his position and an exercise-book to work on "the plagiarism" of himself or "lies." The loss of his stick is to him a *culpa felix*. He has become a thinking thing. At the last stage there is no stick, no Archimedes, no problem whatsoever of the Malone order, chiefly because there is no verifiable body. There is no more mention of a bicycle. The Unnamable in a jar is a bare *cogito*, with Molloy beginning *sum*. His babbling narrowly prevents him from falling into non-existence. His jar is what the body, geometrically conceived, is reducible to by the systematic intelligence.[76] At such a stage even the confidence of *cogito* is dissociated into a delirium of mechanical garrulity, into what Malone's parrot has repeatedly pronounced—*Nihil in intellectu*—a travesty of *Nihil in intellectu quod non prius in sensu* (p. 218). Such a man, Hugh Kenner names, the "Cartesian Centaur," or "*mens sana in corpore disposito*."[77]

"The mind of Europe" is, in fact, indebted to Descartes' doctrine

of "*Cogito, ergo sum*" for its tendency to withdraw into subjective consciousness, falling a prey to his dualism of mind and matter, subject and object, and *cogito* and *sum*, at the same time. In his search for the Truth, the existence of God and the establishment of a rational universe, however, Descartes employed geometric figures as the only self-evident outlines of substances to start with. His rational method conduced to the theory of mechanism of the soul's operation in the body.[78] Man was reduced to "a machine to be so constructed that

> it emits vocables, and even that it emits some correspondent to the action upon it of external objects which cause a change in its organs; for example, if touched in a particular place it may demand what we wish to say to it; if in another, it may cry out that it is hurt.[79]

In *The Unnamable* the Cartesian image of man as "a machine by the hands of God"[80] is deteriorated into that of "a great smooth ball... featureless, but for the eyes, of which only the sockets remain" (p. 305). The body reports chiefly news of its own discomposition, the machine subject to decay. Nevertheless, The Unnamable is a Cartesian talking machine. He acknowledges that his imposed task to talk, and "the quasi-impossibility of fulfilling it, engrossed [him] in a purely mechanical way" (p. 320). With strange detachment, that is, in "a purely mechanical way," he regards the things his hands and feet do. He analyzes their motions through interrogations of all that the senses report:

> I know I am seated, my hands on my knees, because of the pressure against my rump, against my knees. Against my palms the pressure is of my knees, against my knees of my palms but what is it that press against my rump, against the soles of my feet? I don't know. My spine is not supported. I mention these details to make sure I am not lying on my back, my legs raised and bent, my eyes closed (p. 304).

With the same mechanical indifference he examines the knowledge his mind contains. Since he can experience with his eyes nothing but the void directly ahead of him, he ascribes his general knowledge to a shadowy and unreliable committee by which he half recalls being

instructed. The *intellectus* having been completely cut off from *sensus*, Descartes, like The Unnamable, spoken to by a committee, has accomplished the dehumanization of man.

The narrator looks at his own feet and hands as if they were things which would testify his existence in space. The only reliable descriptive marks of the narrative situation are, indeed, things and spaces as the self has been turned into a series of selves, time into instants. As a consequence, in the Beckettian world inanimate things have come to bear the burden of self-analysis and definition, with their value as extensions of the bodies of the characters. Cartesian certainties, we remember, depend fundamentally upon *cogito:* that is, Descartes refused anything for true which his mind had not clearly perceived to be such, although he believed that through the long chain of simple and easy reasonings such as geometrical analysis he could comprehend all things even beyond man's reach.[81] *Sum,* therefore, must be first perceived and inquired into whether it is true or not. Beckett combines Descartes with contemporary emphasis on things in the narrative situation through his conviction that "The source... of the sacred action, the elements of communication, are provided by the physical world, by some immediate and fortuitous act of perception."[82]

Beckett's works are, it necessarily follows, epistemological in the sense that their materials are selves as inquiring beings, selves as objects, objects other than selves, and the degrees and forms of distance between one of these and another. His characters are, in fact, engaged in ceaseless rational inquiry into the problem of "who, what, where I am." Objects as the extensions of the self in space are given mechanical details. Malone feels it pertinent to spend two pages on introducing Macmann's coat with fifteen buttons. His hat, tied to the topmost button of the coat,

> is marred by a wide crack or rent extending in front of the crown down and intending probably to facilitate the introduction of the skull. For the coat and hat have this much in common, that whereas the coat is too big, the hat is too small.... And it would not surprise me to learn that they had been bought,

> one at the hatter's, the other at the tailor's, perhaps the same day and by the same toff, for such men exist, I mean fine handsome men six foot tall and over and all in keeping but the head, small from over-breeding. And it is a pleasure to find oneself again in the presence of one of those immutable relations between harmoniously perishing terms (p. 228-229).

Persons exist in relation to things in the narrative situation. Thus, the bicycle in *Molloy*, the stick, the persona's concern about the inventory of his possessions—a needle stuck into two corks, a scrap of newspaper, a photograph of an ass wearing a boater, etc.—in *Malone Dies* and the jar in *The Unnamable* comprise not a background for human identity but substitutes. As the body disintegrates, as the machine dwindles in space from the bicycle to the crutches to the stick to the wheel chair to the bed, the mind becomes freer. On the threshold of being no more, Malone desires, "I succeed in being another," or he hopes to objectify himself as the object of his perception, "as the stranger" (p. 195). Here the problem of fiction-writing and the problem of existence are fused in his consciousness. He has been feeling all along "the wild beast of earnestness padded up and down, roaring, ravening, rending," within him. He has played "the clown, all alone, hour after hour, motionless, often standing, spellbound, groaning" (p. 194). To write stories of "a man and woman, of a thing, and of an animal" is "to relieve the tedium," and to seek "the rapture of vertigo, the letting go, the fall, the gulf, the relapse to darkness, to nothingness" (p. 195). The ultimate power of creation is brought in to effect a final rescue of the self seeking its identity.

Molloy moves toward Moran, Moran to Molly, till the two are merged into one creation. Malone's stick enables him to exist, as his pencil is the means of creative extension. "This exercise-book is," Malone confesses, "my life..., it has taken me a long time to resign myself to that" (p. 274). Malone (=me alone) has created Macmann (=son of man) in order to be able to "slip into him...in the hope of learning something" (p. 226). The self has already slit itself into "a series of local phenomena," difficult to be fixed in a definite place at

a definite time. His effort to be another is doomed to fail, for the memory of his younger days associates itself with the action of his fictional world "in fits and starts" (p. 183).

> Live and invent. I have tried... Invent. It is not the word. Neither is live. No matter... I began again, to try and live, cause to live, be another, in myself, in another. How false all this is (pp. 194-195).

It is no use indicting words. Molloy as well as Malone and The Unnamable thoroughly knows the impotence of words as symbols of pseudo-realities. "You would do better, at least no worse, to obliterate texts than to blacken margins, to fill the holes of words till all is black and flat and the whole ghastly business looks like what is, senseless, speechless, issueless misery" (p. 13). Malone wonders if he is not writing his autobiography, talking again about himself in "shoddy" words. At last he gives up his hopeless project, "yes, a little creature, I shall try and make a little creature, to hold in my arms, a little creature in my image, no matter what I say" (p. 226). Malone performs a parody of the Creation and at the same time he seeks to know himself through writing fiction, in quest of an identity that constantly eludes him. Thus, a fragment of fiction is followed by a fragment of self-examination. The climax of the subject-object schism resolves at the end. In his story Lemuel looks at his hatchet "on which the blood will never dry" and with which (here Malone's sentences falter into short and repeated words) he will never touch any one "any more": with these two words the novel ends. Not only his pencil, stick and Lemuel's hatchet, but fiction and reality are intermixed. The vanishing of the object corresponds to that of the subject. Verbal and physical events coincide. The short yet repeated phrases convey to us the "immediate and fortuitous" sense of the dying moment as Malone's consciousness goes into nothingness.

Malone luxuriates in fiction and his memory, though scanty, still serves "the plagiarism of oneself." In *The Unnamable*, with his machine having dwindled to the "talking ball," the narrator presents himself

as a *cogito* furnished only with "the terror-stricken babble of the condemned to silence" (p. 354). His examination of the topography of his consciousness is thorough-going, logical and mechanically precise. Through his doubt of his words as "theirs," he doubts his own existence. He doubts his memory reaching almost its vanishing point, which contains his knowledge, imposed upon it by "them," by dint of habit. He perceives that "they" are themselves "miscreated puppets" by the master, who will

> go silent perhaps and go, one day, one evening, slowly, sadly, in Indian file, casting long shadows, toward their master, who will punish them, or who will spare them, what else is there, up above, for those who lose, punishment, pardon, so they say (pp. 364-365).

In his quest for his real *sum*, he turns to the checking of the inventory of his existence as if "once beyond the equator [one] would start turning inwards again" (p. 317). Even in his mind he finds only what his master has taught the puppet messengers to say to him. "Years is one of Basil's [the messenger's] ideas" (p. 309). The existence of the master may be one of their ideas, but "they"—presumably, educators, parents, law-makers, ministers, etc.—have told him that he depends upon God in the last analysis (p. 298). All is vague and obscure, but the one reality that he is conscious of is that he is damned, condemned to talk (p. 367) for what sin he does not know and that he has to "expiate vilely, like a pig, dumb, uncomprehending, possessed of no utterance but theirs" (p. 369). Now bare of the machine, habit, time and memory, and even words, The Unnamable plunges into the abyss of the subject-object, mind-matter antagonism and the reality-word disparity, pushing the epistemological quest to the problem of God in its "last analysis" for His having created such a defective creature only to be damned.

The Beckettian man, however, knowing his own defective condition, prefers "the fall to the trouble of having to lie down or stand fast" (p. 54). There is nothing in common between this man and Prometheus, "that miscreant who mocked the gods, invented fire, denatured

clay, and... obliged humanity" (p. 303). His aim is not the conspiration to discredit God but survival, the maintenance of "smug will to live."[83] However, the same fractionizing rate, at which his self is objectified and mechanized into "the Punch and Judy box" (p. 339), is applied to God. The mysteries of Dispensation are reduced to the image of "sporting God to plague his creature, *per pro* his chosen shits" (p. 338). One has to listen to the mother of God "through tears of mirth,... in the way of bugaboos" (p. 360). The picture of Jesus and the thieves on the crosses usually evokes irony. "For why be discouraged, one of the thieves was saved, that is a generous percentage" (p. 255). As there is no means of communication except blows on the head between Malone and the visitor, there is no intimate communion between heaven and man. "Heaven can do nothing to help" (p. 353). The Unnamable "never paid [God] enough attention. No more perhapses either, that old trick is worn to a thread" (p. 312). He looks at the hope of light in the Bible with indifference; "Let there then be light, it will not necessarily be disastrous. Or let there be none, we'll manage without it" (pp. 361-362). He is alone, facing the fear of what Pascal called "le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis."[84] He finally declares, "I owe my existence to no one" (p. 294): he is "the first and the last" (p. 361), in potential allusion to God revealing himself as "the Alpha and the Omega."[85]

The Unnamable, *Alogon*, with "no name for me, no pronoun for me," (p. 404) floating, while babbling like a "caged bird" (p. 387), in timeless annihilation, zero, assumes himsulf to be "the subman God,"[86] totally deprived of divinity. This image of The Unnamable is, perhaps, one of the outcomes of the Beckettian quasi-mathematical and at the same time ludicra-seria pursuit of "the inexpressibly terrible," the essence of existence.

Conclusion

> They build up hypotheses that collapse on top of one another, it's human, a lobster couldn't do it (p. 372).

James Joyce's monologue intérieur in *Ulysses* is an attempt to restore, in his way, the oral life of Dublin to its totality. In the process the temporal perspective fixed in the remembering consciousness of specific individuals and a clearly established present (Dublin, June 16, 1904), deepens itself into the sphere of "symbolic omnitemporality": that is, "all the great motifs of the cultural history of Europe are contained in it."[87] It is reported that when he had completed *Finnegans Wake*, he said to Beckett, who was with him, that he could do anything with language.[88] Indeed, he holds the whole mind of Europe for re-examination through what Beckett terms "the comedy of an exhaustive enumeration," the source of which technique can be traced to the synthesis of the two patterns of *mimesis*, Greek and Hebraeo-Christian, to the same extent that the word "creator" applied to the artist is a Greek and Christian metaphor.

Beckett, who once served and was much influenced by Joyce, shows his approach toward vocal life and human existence *in toto*, more excavatory and negative. With his conviction that "the only fertile [artistic] research is... a contraction of the spirit,a descent,"[89] he has contracted "the mind of Europe" into the consciousness of his persona, the first person narrator: the whole universe comes down, as a result, to a room or a bed, within the range of sight, hearing and smell, where the man enacts a comedian of "an exhaustive enumeration,"[90] ceaselessly and methodically trying to define himself, others and things that happen to come into touch with and constitute the geography of his mind. Negative, indeed, is his choice of characters. Whereas the more Joyce knew the more he could, tending toward omnipotence and omniscience, Beckett assures us, "I'm working with impotence, ignorance. I don't think impotence has been exploited in the past."[91] Impotence and ignorance, in Beckett, may not necessarily

mean stupidity nor do his characters fools qua fools, but the reverse of omnipotence and omniscience. As a matter of fact, the Beckettian men in the *Trilogy* are former intellectuals with occasional references to *The Times Literary Supplement*, Latin phrases, Belacqua, Sordello, Ulysses, and the ethics of Arnold Geulincx (1624-1669), the Belgian philosopher and modifier of Descartes, who completed the separation of mind from matter, of *cogito* from *sum.*[92]

Whether or not The Unnamable's three inabilities—"the inability to speak, the inability to be silent, and solitude" (p. 396), "feeling nothing, knowing nothing, capable of nothing, wanting nothing" (p. 349)—are distant echoes of Geulincx's dictum—"*Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis*,"[93] all the characters suffer from a progression of disintegration as a logical and necessary outcome of Molloy's advocacy for "the inexhaustible faculty of negation, its relentless definition of man, as though he were no better than God, in terms of what he is not" (p. 39). Like a dwindling permutation of ciphers of the surd toward zero, the Beckettian heroes diminish in capacity in the inexhaustible process of negation. Molloy, the first to come in the series, already half-mechanized with a bicycle as the substitute for his stiff leg, appears himself as an exile from the world in his encounter with the policeman through his inability to fix his identity in time and space. He has difficulty in communicating with others. Words come to him, devoid of meaning. After the loss of his bicycle, he tries to crawl to his mother with "no hope of crucifixion" (p. 78). His pretense to seek his mother's womb, to avoid the hellishness of existence, alternating with a wish to hurry to the grave, proves, after all, to be his quest for his own identity.

Deprived of God, outcast from the world, with time having been turned into presents and self split into many *I's*, in such an absurd situation, the narrators find that the static object becomes the present index of the existence of the self in time which may be parallel to that in space. Since "the physical world is a projection of the individual mind," things become substitues for the self. Dying is a matter of

self-inventory. As *cogito* is further separated from *sum*, the body, its extension in space, being subject to decay, scanty physical experience dwindles in the same proportion to scanty remains of perception. Sense data take time to travel from external things to the percipient organs of Malone (p. 237). He, then, tries to slip into another to examine and define himself, by objectifying his own self in vain. The epistemological quest for identity ends in frustration and futility. A mere experiment on fiction-writing! "Saying is inventing. Wrong, very rightly wrong" (p. 32). All are lies. One doubts the potency and validity of words as a means of creation and communication.

At the last stage of dissolution, the nearest decimal of zero, The Unnamable doubts if his words are "theirs." His doubt leads to the doubt of his knowledge and his own existence itself. At the same time he feels that he is condemned to talk, a punishment, perhaps, for having been born. The Original Sin predestines man to be a talking machine. His attitude toward word and existence converges in his perception and he plunges into the ontological question of existence. He settles the word-existence problem thus: "I have only to go on, as if there was something to be done, something begun, somewhere to go. It all boils down to a question of words" (p. 335). Later, "words" are reduced to voices: "It is a matter of voices" (p. 335), meaningless voices. Finally, "All is a matter of going" (p. 404). To survive and live means to utter words in a hell of words. "I need them [blank words]...I need them all, to be able to go on, it's a lie" (p. 408).

Self-exiled from "them," intermediates between him and God, there is no communication between The Unnamable and heaven as there is no means of communication but blows on the head between Molloy and his mother, between Malone and his visitor. As *Alogos* stretches itself to infinity, God will never be reached through mathematical computation nor answer man's questions nor come in person. Molloy's attempt even to control such a trifling phenomenon as the sucking stones through finding a methematical system ends in frustration. God is aloof from human efforts to build hypotheses which collapse

on top of one another. *"Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis."* The strategy of living becomes identical with going, waiting: waiting, in turn, involves suffering and filling in the hours,[94] not like Prometheus' rebellion against Zeus nor unlike the vegetable's which wilts and disintegrates.[95]

As words lose meaning, the shadow of silence grows darker in the "dimly transparent" universe. The Unnamable realizes:

> the silence is outside, outside, inside, there is nothing but here, and the silence outside, nothing but this voice and the silence all round (p. 410).

According to Vico, "silence" implies the end of a cycle.[96] It is annihilation and zero. The fear of silence is the fear of annihilation where even the "blank voices" must stop. The Beckettian world is, indeed, an absurd world, overshadowed with "chance, death, the irreducible pluralism of life and of truth, the unintelligibility of the real" and sin, expiation and silence. The Unnamable faces God and "le silence éternel de ces espaces infinis" alone, having been reduced almost to the simplest level of existence.

There is constantly heard the voice of "a world collapsing endlessly, a frozen world, under a faint untroubled sky, enough to see by, yes, and frozen too" (p. 40). The absurd world is a shattered world in fragments. Identity becomes obscure. The barrier between "I," "you," and "they" increasingly grows thin and finally disappears, leaving behind the essence of existence and the voice. Toward the end we no longer see the grotesque figure of The Unnamable: we only hear his voice. His babbling continues for pages, without commas or full-stops, in repetitious, and circular movements. The forms of language cloak the structure of the individual world.[97] Moreover, Beckett believes that the identification of subject and object can be attained through the words "traced by inspired perception," where emerges the only reality.[98] The comical execution of this theory is seen in Lucky's sermon on the nature and perfection of God, if we are allowed to apply "inspiration" to his outburst in a pseudo-Platonic fashion:

> Given the existence as uttered forth in the public works of Puncher and Wattmann of a personal God quaquaquaqua with the white beard quaquaquaqua outside time without extension who from the heights of divine apathia divine athambia divine aphasia loves us dearly with some exceptions for reasons unknown....[99]

Through a circular repetition of "for reasons unknown" scattered at irregular and irrelevant intervals we hear his faith in God in the affirmative. In the same manner, in the chaos of "will," "can't," "must," "you," "I," "they," "I dont' know," we hear The Unnamable's key words—words, stories, sin, pain, go on, wait, silence: we hear his "smug will" to live, continue to speak and write in the universe where a Mephistophilis may exclaim again, "why this is hell, nor I am out of it."[100] Self in ruins is, indeed, reflected and imitated by words in fragments through The Unnamable's impotent and ignorant perception. Although the ontological problem of existence may remain unanswered as in the case of the surd, we see that subject and object are identified through inspired perception at the lowest level, and then that words acquire their own meaning and oral life.

The problem of existence is dissolved, not philosophically, but in terms of art. To describe a world in ruins the artist must make his art a ruin before building a new one. Since Descartes man has been building hypotheses in his vain effort to define existence, human and divine. Creation has been quickly followed by annihilation, but system-building is peculiar to man, "a lobster couldn't do it." As long as man cannot stop going on, and even the meaningless voice or frozen words in print keep going, as the proof of man's existence refusing to fall into nothingness or silence, the artist is obliged to write, even if he suspects that what he is waiting for and trying to define is nothing. While waiting to get something to be ascertained, it would be better to say babababa. The will to live and write will help the faint light of burning in darkness. Besides, even The Unnamable does "not despair of one day sparing [himself], without going silent" (p. 302). Whereas for Joyce his work was an artistic creation, whether

or not it was a supreme experiment on oral life, for Beckett, through his pursuit of word and existence, the duty to write turns out to be a matter of survival both for his own existence and fiction.

In the image of The Unnamable the two patterns of *mimesis* and cosmogonies in European culture are completely fused. At the last of the series of inexhaustible negation The Unnamable appears somewhere between the circumference and the centre, assuming finally the name of *Alogon*, the Pythagorean mystery, and at the same time "the first and the last," not "the Alpha and the Omega" in the capital letters. He may, in fact, be what Frank Kermode calls the "subman, the modern God."[101] In opposition to Nietzshe's "superman," The Unnamable embodies and visualizes the "poverty of modern man," due to the loss of religions and mythologies.[102] The loss of God is identical with the loss of the Word. When Eliot sings of "the lost word" in *Ash-Wednesday*, he still maintains his faith in the Word: "And the light shone in darkness and / Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled / About the center of the silent Word."[103] Beckett, however, in the world constantly falling into fragments, he has only a method of negation in defining and finding existence, "in terms of what he is not." His trilogy is, on the one hand, a terrible parody of Omnipotence, yet on the other hand, his choice material—impotence and ignorance—shows the other side of the same shield. His characters' predicaments in words and alienation from God and the world chiefly arise from their too insistent solipsism and mania for symmetry. Even The Unnamable acknowledges that "what prevents the miracle [the epiphany] is the spirit of method to which I have perhaps been a little addicted" (p. 303). A persistent employment of the Cartesian mathematical method to control existence, human and divine, is the cause of confusion and separation of man from God and others. The Beckettian characters are, as a consequence, literally reduced to the Cartesian talking machines, ridiculed as surds without any verifiable rational identity, isolated. The image of "a man riding a bicycle" is a travesty of Descartes' philosophy from which modern emphasis

on subjectivity is said to have started. Their world is enclosed in their language, coming into existence with Molloy's "unreal journey" (p. 16). They are actually comedians of "an exhaustive enumeration" in a fictional world perceived in their consciousness "dimly transparent." They are personae, after all, not Beckett himself. The real author may scoff at the serious-faced reader, like Swift and Sterne, "A harmless joke" (p. 350). Playful as a Cretan liar, Beckett may say, "Elliptically speaking, ... by way of induction, or deduction, I forget which, that I knew what it was" (p. 20). It is up to us whether we wring our heart at the terrible tragedy of the fall of modern man or enjoy the game or sholarly joke, while reading Beckett. His works, are, in either case, Beckett's attempt to project into execution his theory of fiction stated in his comment on *Proust*, and his declaration that he is obliged to express and write as an artist and that he will do it. In either case, on the part of the reader, we know he is not the same man after he has read Beckett.

NOTES

1. Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York : Grove Press, 1954), p. 56.
2. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1971), p. 74.
3. Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, in *The Works of Thomas Carlyle*, ed. H. D. Traill (New York : AMS, 1974), I , 57.
4. E. K., "Epistle" for Edmund Spenser, *The Shepheardes Calender*, in *Spenser's Minor Poems*, ed. Ernest de Selincourt (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1960), p. 3.
5. John Dryden, "The Preface" to *Religio Laici*, in *The Best of Dryden*, ed. Louis I. Bredvold (New York : Ronald Press, 1933), p. 198.
6. William Wordsworth, "Preface" to the Second Edition of *The Lyrical Ballads* (1800), in *English Romantic Writers*, ed. David Perkins (New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1967), p. 321.
7. Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis : The Representation of Reality in Eastern Literature*, trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1968), pp. 552-553.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 554.
9. Frye, p. 84.
10. Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice-Cream," in *The American Tradition in Literature*, eds. Sculley Bradley *et al.*, 3rd ed. (New York : Grosset & Dunlap, 1967), p. 1743.
11. Frederick J. Hoffman, *Samuel Beckett : The Language of Self* (Carbondale : Southern Illinois University Press, 1962), p. 69.
12. William Butler Yeats, "Among School Children," l. 64.
13. Jean-Paul Sartre, "An Explication of *The Stranger*," in *Camus : A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Germaine Brée (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 109.
14. *Loc. cit.*
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 114-115.
16. Samuel Beckett, *Proust and Three Dialogues* (London ; John Calder, 1965), p. 64.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 103.
18. Samuel Beckett, *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett : Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable* (New York : Grove Press, 1965), p. 370. All quotations of Beckett's trilogy are from this edition.

19. Beckett, *Proust*, P. 125.
20. T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in *Selected Essays* (London : Faber and Faber, 1966), p. 16.
21. J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens : A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston : Beacon Press, 1970), p. 162.
22. Aristotle, *Poetics*, in *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism*, trans. and eds. Alex Preminger et al. (New York : Frederick Ungar, 1974), p. 110.
23. Ernst Robert Curtius, *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*, trans. Willard R. Trask (New York : Harper & Row, 1963), p. 145.
24. Plato, *Symposium*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, trans. B. Jowett (Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1964), I, 537.
25. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*, trans. Justin O'Brien (New York : Vintage Books, 1955), p. 70.
26. Curtius, p. 146.
27. Auerbach, pp. 11-12.
28. Alexander Pope, *An Essay on Criticism*, I, 69-73.
29. *St. John* i. 1.
30. Dante Alighieri, *The Convivio* (London : The Temple Classics, 1924), pp. 63-67.
31. For further detail, see Wylie Sypher, *Literature and Technology : The Alien Vision* (New York : Random House, 1968).
32. Ian watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles : The University of California Press, 1957), p. 60.
33. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature and Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London : Alder, 1969), p. 534.
34. J. Chiari, *Landmarks of Contemporary Drama* (London : Gordian, 1965), p. 15.
35. Frank Kermode, "Beckett, Snow and Pure Poverty," *Encounter*, XV, No. 1 (July, 1960), 74.
36. Hoffman, p. 60.
37. Plato, *Republic*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, II, 231.
38. Plato, *Phaedrus*, in *The Dialogues of Plato*, III, 184.
39. Frye, p. 75.
40. René Descartes, *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes*, trans. John Veitch (New York : Tudor Publishing), pp. 231-232.
41. Hugh Kenner, *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett : The Stoic Comedians*

(Boston : Beacon Press, 1962), p. 46.
42. *Ibid.*, p. XV.
43. John Lysons, *Chomsky*, trans. into Japanese Kinsuke Hasegawa (Tokyo : Shincho-sha, 1972), pp. 19-20.
44. Kenner, pp. 48-54.
45. Auerbach, p. 544.
46. Hugh Kenner, *Samuel Beckett : A Critical Study* (Berkeley and Los Angeles : The University of California Press, 1968), p. 120.
47. Camus, pp. 69-87.
48. Samuel Beckett, quoted from John Fletcher, *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* (London : Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 194.
49. Sartre, p. 115.
50. Søren Aabye Kierkegaard, quoted from Camus, p. 19.
51. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 32.
52. Samuel Beckett, *Murphy* (Paris : Bordas, 1947), p. 61.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 84.
54. Eric Partridge, *Origins : A Short Etymological Dictionary of Modern English* (London : Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 347.
55. John C. Smock, *The Greek Element in English Words*, ed. Percy W. Long (New York, 1931), p. 14.
56. William Rose Benét, *The Reader's Encyclopedia* (New York : Thomas Y. Cromwell, 1965), p. 4.
57. *Ibid.*, p. 518.
58. Curtius, p. 423.
59. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 19.
60. Beckett, *Murphy*, p. 84.
61. Jean Bloch-Michel, *Le Présént de l'indıcatif: Essai sur le Nouveau Roman* (Callimard, 1963), trans. into Japanese Toshio Shima and Yoshitaka Matsuzaki (Tokyo : Kinokuniya, 1967), p. 11.
62. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 19.
63. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, pp. 106-107.
64. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 60.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
66. Henri Bergson, *Laughter : An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic*, trans. Cloudesley Brereton and Fred Rothwell (New York : Macmillan, 1937), p. 37.
67. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 109.
68. T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," in *Selected Essays*, p. 146.
69. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 105.
70. Enid Welsford, *The Fool : His Social and Literary History* (New

York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1935), p. 237.

71. I *Corinthians* xiii : 12.
72. Hoffman, p. 69.
73. See Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia dell' Arte* (Cambridge: The University of Cambridge Press, 1963).
74. Camus, p. 11.
75. Auerbach, p. 544.
76. John Fletcher, *The Novels of Samuel Beckett* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1970), p. 129.
77. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 121.
78. John Veitch, "Special Introduction" to René Descartes, *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes*, p. v.
79. Descartes, p. 188.
80. *Loc. cit.*
81. Veitch, p. v.
82. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 36.
83. *Ibid.*, p. 15.
84. Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *OEuvres of Blaise Pascal*, ed. Léon Brunschvicg (Paris: Hachette, 1921), XIII, 127.
85. *Revelation* i. 8.
86. Kermode, pp. 74-75. Here Kermode questions, "Is Molloy the ultimate subman, the modern God?"
87. Auerbach, p. 544.
88. Ichiro Ando, "Special Introduction" to James Joyce, *Dubliners, trans.* Ichiro Ando (Tokyo: Shinsho-sha, 1971), p. 323.
89. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 65.
90. *Ibid.*, p. 92.
91. Kenner, *Samuel Beckett*, p. 33.
92. Fletcher, p. 51.
93. Ruby Cohn, "Philosophical Fragments in the Works of Samuel Beckett," *Samuel Beckett: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Martin Esslin. Twentieth Century Views (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall), pp. 170-171. The Latin phrase means, "Where you are worth nothing, there you should want nothing."
94. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 19.
95. Walter A. Strauss, "Dante's Belacqua and Beckett's Tramps," *Comparative Literature*, 11 (Summer, 1959), 259.
96. William York Tindall, *A Reader's Guide to James Joyce* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1963), p. 245.

97. Hoffman, p. 69.
98. Beckett, *Proust*, p. 84.
99. Beckett, *Waiting for Godot*, p. 29.
100. Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragical History of Dr. Faustus* iii. 80.
101. Kermode, p. 75.
102. *Ibid.*, p. 74.
103. T. S. Eliot, *Ash-Wednesday*, v. 1-9.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

I Primary Sources

Beckett, Samuel. *Murphy*. Paris : Bordas, 1947.

_____. *Proust and Three Dialogues*. London : John Calder, 1965.

_____. *Three Novels by Samuel Beckett : Molloy, Malone Dies, The Unnamable*. New York : Grove Press, 1965.

_____. *Waiting for Godot*. New York : Grove Press, 1954.

II Secondary Sources

Auerbach, Erich. *Mimesis : The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1968.

Camus, Albert. *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays*. Trans. Justin O'Brien. New York : Vintage Books, 1955.

Curtius, Ernst Robert. *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York : Harper & Row, 1963.

Descartes, René. *The Method, Meditations and Philosophy of Descartes*. Trans. John Veitch. New York : Tudor Publishing.

Eliot, T. S. *Selected Essays*. London : Faber and Faber, 1966.

Esslin, Martin. *The Theatre of the Absurd*. Garden City, New York : Doubleday, 1969.

_____, ed. *Samuel Beckett : A Collection of Critical Essays*. Twentieth Century Views. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1965.

Fletcher, John. *Samuel Beckett's Art*. London : Chatto & Windus, 1970.

_____. *The Novels of Samuel Beckett*. Chatto & Windus, 1967.

Frye, Northrop. *Anatomy of Criticism*. Princeton, New Jersey : Princeton University Press, 1971.

Hoffman, Frederick, J. *Samuel Beckett : The Language of Self*. Carbondale : Southern Illinois University Press, 1962.

Huizinga, J. *Homo Ludens : A Study of the Play Element in Culture*. Boston : Beacon Press, 1970.

Kenner, Hugh. *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett : The Stoic Comedians*. Boston : Beacon Press, 1970.

_____. *Samuel Beckett : A Critical Study*. Berkeley and Los Angeles : The University of California Press, 1968.

Kermode, Frank. "Beckett, Snow and Pure Poverty," *Encounter*, XV,

No. I (July, 1960), 73-77.
Sartre, Jean-Paul. "An Explication of *The Stranger*." In *Camus: A Collection of Critical Essays*. Ed. Germaine Brée. Twentieth Century Views. Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962.
Strauss, Walter A. "Dante's Belacqua and Beckett's Tramps," *Comparative Literature*, 11 (Summer, 1959), 250-261.
Welford, Enid. *The Fool: His Social and Literary History*. New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1935.